

IN THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-11 (cancelled).

12. (new) An orthopedic ratcheting forceps, especially for fixation of fractures comprising two handles wherein a first catching element is mounted pivotally with a first handle, wherein a second catching element is mounted a second handle, wherein the catching elements can assume only two stable settings which can be switched with a single hand, one closed setting within which the jaws of the forceps can only be further closed and an open setting within which the handles of the forceps are freely movable, so that the forceps can be opened as well as closed, a spring means is provided in the first handle, said spring means biased between a first and second mounting point, a lever end connected with one of the catching elements engages the spring means and through movement of an activation element the lever end is switchable between the closed setting and the open setting.

13. (new) The forceps according to claim 12, wherein the activation element is the first handle which is pivotable.

14. (new) The forceps according to claim 12 wherein the spring means is a leaf spring mounted within the first handle or wherein the spring means is a part of said first handle having a memory effect allowing for the two settings.

15. (new) The forceps according to claim 14, wherein said spring is mounted between abutting side walls within said first handle.

16. (new) The forceps according to claim 15, wherein said first handle comprises two portions hinged together at a pivoting point, wherein said pivoting point is the second mounting point of the spring and wherein said spring is confined between two, especially convex, side walls of the jaws portion of the two portions and the prolongation of the fingerhole portion of the two portions forms the lever end and engages the leaf spring.

17. (new) The forceps according to claim 16, wherein said first catching element is a

rod mounted pivotally on the second handle, the rod extending through an opening within the fingerhole portion and having grooves on the side directed towards the jaws of the forceps and wherein the grooves of the rod can be engaged through the complementary catching element formed as a nose extending from said fingerhole portion.

18. (new) The forceps according to claim 17, wherein said rod is prebiased in direction of the jaws of the forceps through a spring pushing the rod in the direction of the grooves on the side directed towards the jaws.

19. (new) The forceps according to claim 12, wherein the second mounting point is the point of engagement of the lever end which can be switched between the two side walls of the first handle.

20. (new) The forceps according to claim 19, wherein the catching elements and the complementary catching elements are curved elements wherein at least one catching element has a changing radius of curvature, in order to provide, in the closed setting - a blocking device upon contact of the surfaces of the catching elements against further movement in the direction of opening the forceps.

21. (new) The forceps according to claim 12, wherein said first catching element is a rod mounted pivotally on the second handle, the rod extending through an opening within the handle and having grooves on the side directed towards the jaws of the forceps and wherein the grooves of the rod can be engaged through the spring.

22. (new) The forceps according to claim 21, wherein the complementary catching element is part of the activation element comprising the complementary catching elements which can be pushed inside said opening within the handle to disengage the spring from the rod.

23. (new) A forceps comprising:
a first member having a clamping portion at a first end and a gripping portion at a second end;
a second member pivotally connected to said first member at a first pivot point,

said second member having a clamping portion at a first end and a gripping portion at a second end, said first and second gripping portions adapted to be gripped by the thumb and fingers of a hand;

a locking element mounted on said first member for engaging a complimentary locking element on said second member, said locking element opening biased into both a first locked position and a second unlocked position; and

an actuator mounted on said gripping portion of said first member for moving said locking element between said first locked position and said second locked position, said actuator adapted to be moved by said thumb or fingers of said hand while said gripping portions of said first and second members are gripped.

24. (new) The forceps as set forth in claim 23 wherein said gripping portion of said first member is a fingerhole portion pivotally coupled to said clamping portion of said first member and said actuator is actuated by movement of said fingerhole portion with respect to said clamping portion.

25. (new) The forceps as set forth in claim 23 wherein said actuator is operatively coupled to said first member and has a finger engaging portion located adjacent a surface of said first member gripping portion remote from said second member gripping portion.